

MUSIC

Jack White thanks Detroit, gives message from Meg White as duo inducted into Rock Hall

Christina Fuoco-Karasinski Special to The Detroit News

Updated Nov. 9, 2025, 9:56 a.m. ET

Jack White's thank-you speech at the White Stripes' Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony on Saturday doubled as a love letter to Detroit — and his absent “sister” Meg White.

“I thank you and all of Detroit,” said White, name-checking a mélange of city favorites such as Gold Dollar, the Gories, the Dirt Bombs, the Hentchmen, Coney Islands and the Detroit Zoo. He posted his notes atop the list of honorees on his Facebook account during the ceremony at the Peacock Theater in Los Angeles.

“The White Stripes are proud to represent the sound of Detroit punk and garage rock, and the garage rock movement that caught folks' imagination around the world a few years back,” he said at the ceremony.

In the late 1990s, Jack, a fiery guitarist who loved blues and punk, and Meg, a minimalist drummer, formed the White Stripes. Jack, the creative engine, infused their music with Delta blues, country and punk, while Meg's primal drumming grounded it in something elemental.

Jack and Meg — who were once married but presented themselves to the public as siblings — formed the band in 1997. Their early gigs were raw and raucous, playing in tiny watering holes like Cass Corridor's Gold Dollar.

The White Stripes hit indie rock stardom with 2001's "White Blood Cells," which spawned "Fell in Love with a Girl." The follow-up, "Elephant" (2003), paved their place in stadiums and protests with "Seven Nation Army."

Breaking up in 2011 after six studio albums, the White Stripes cited "a myriad of reasons, but mostly to preserve what is beautiful and special about the band."

Jack then formed Third Man Records, while Meg retreated from the public eye.

"I spoke with Meg White the other day, and she said that she's very sorry she couldn't be here," Jack said.

"She wanted me to tell you she's very grateful to all the folks who supported her through all the years; it really means a lot to her."

Meg White was not there personally, but she was on the minds of fans and Jack. Fans screamed, "We love you, Meg," through Jack's speech. He echoed that sentiment.

Jack said Meg helped him write his speech and corrected grammatical mistakes.

"She said, 'Do you remember, Jack, when we used to walk around animals?' For some reason, animals would steer us. They would stop and stare at us. Even at the Detroit Zoo, an elephant did the exact same thing."

He read a piece he didn't have time to share with Meg.

"One time, a girl climbed a tree, and in that tree was a boy, her brother," he read.

"She thought the tree looked so glorious and beautiful, but it was just an oak tree. And these two so loved the world that they brought forth a parade float, one they built in their garage behind the oak tree with their own bare hands.

"The boy looked at this giant peppermint on the wheels and felt pride, pride that it was produced in the Motor City, just like in the big factories, but it was just in their

garage. He looked at the girl, his sister, he thought, ‘And like ‘Little Rascals,’ they said, ‘Let’s put on a show.’ And they paraded this float through the Cass Corridor, standing atop the peppermint pulled by white horses, or maybe it was a red Econoline van.

“And many of the blocks they traveled were empty, but some had people, and some of those people cheered and some laughed, and some even threw stones, and with their bare hands, the two started to clap and sing and make up songs. And some people kept watching and swaying and moving. And then one person even smiled. And the boy and the girl looked at each other, and they also smiled. They kept on smiling, smiling from a new freedom, knowing that they had shared and made another person feel something, and they thought the person smiling at them was a stranger, someone they didn’t even know. But it wasn’t just a stranger, it was God.”

Jack shared that his father kept thousands of jokes and routines on white cards in a file cabinet.

He encouraged newbie musicians to “get your hands dirty, drop the screens and get out of your garage in your little room and get obsessed with something. We all want to share what you might create.”

Fellow Detroiter Iggy Pop inducted the White Stripes, whom he heralded as the rebirth of rock ‘n’ roll.

“Rock ‘n’ roll has been declared ‘dead’ so many times, right?” Pop said. “And then miracles of miracles, a couple of kids from Detroit decided to believe in it again.

“The White Stripes were not like the other bands. The first time I saw them, it was in a photograph. Just the two of them standing there, side by side, grinning like they had some kind of fun secret, like they stole some cookies from a cookie jar.”

A longtime White Stripes supporter, Pop recalled skeptics.

“They look really young. And basically, I was looking at a 21st-century Adam and Eve, who had started a rock ‘n’ roll band. I thought, ‘Cute kids. They’ll probably go places.’ And they did. They did go places. They started their career at dive bars in Detroit, Michigan, like the Gold Dollar. They played with bands like the Gories and the Dirtbombs. They made a big, big load of noise.”

With that “noise,” Jack could “twang like a hillbilly” and “screech like an owl, but he could also write.”

Pop said the White Stripes echoed the sounds of the Who, the Beatles, art rock, and the blues.

“He could do it all, and the writing he is capable of was something that was not typical of the great Detroit bands of the ‘60s and ‘70s. It was a new sensory, and the White Stripes’ music was coming from a foundation of love, instead of revolution. It was time to turn a page.”

Pop described The White Stripes as creating the entire world for themselves. “When you listen to the White Stripes, you step into their world of vocals, guitar, drums and red, white and black. But also images of cream soda and playing on the playground.”

The White Stripes were inducted alongside Cyndi Lauper, Salt-N-Pepa, OutKast, Joe Cocker, Soundgarden, Chubby Checker, Bad Company, Warren Zevon, Thom Bell, the architect of the Philly sound, session bassist Carol Kaye, session piano man Nicky Hopkins and record producer and executive Lenny Waronker.

